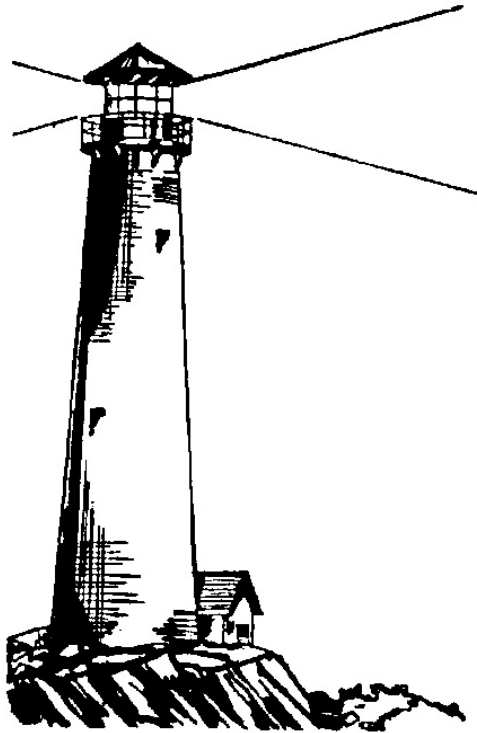


CHURCH OF GOD

SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY



**JOSEPH, A TOOL
IN GOD'S HAND**

JOSEPH, A TOOL IN GOD'S HAND

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NOTE TO THE TEACHERS

This booklet is intended to be a *help* in preparing Sunday school lessons. The title, subject, and topics are only the menu. It is *your responsibility* to prepare the meal.

The proper ingredients are the salty inspirations of the Holy Spirit, seasoned with His grace. Bake the ingredients at a hot temperature in the oven of prayer. The time-tested recipe for preparing a nutritious meal is found in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

LESSON 1

JOSEPH REVEALS HIS DREAMS

Scripture Text: Genesis 37:1-11

In this quarterly's lessons, we turn to the Old Testament and consider how God used one man, who listened to Him, to bless many. We will trace five important lines of thought brought out in the life of Joseph.

- (1) God watches over an individual who trusts Him.
- (2) God's promises and predictions are always perfectly fulfilled.
- (3) Joseph is a type of Christ.
- (4) The lives of the brothers show the plan of salvation.
- (5) God works out His purposes.

Good came to Joseph, Jacob, his brothers, and Israel. Pharaoh and the Egyptians shared in that as well.

MEMORY VERSE: Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?

—Job 31:4

Joseph Dreamed a Dream

Not only is Joseph a type of Christ, but he can be compared to David. David was held in contempt by his brothers. David was chosen to deliver the Israelites from their enemies, the Philistines.

Genesis 37:1-4 Jacob loved Joseph more because he was a son of his old age and the son of his favorite wife, Rachel. Possibly, Joseph was more humble and obedient than his brothers. This, along with the fact that Joseph carried to his father reports of his brothers' evil ways, caused his brothers to hate him. God often uses things that are despised ("foolish things") to "confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

Genesis 37:5-8 Joseph dreamed a dream. Dreams are common, but this dream was unusual in its *source* and *content*. God sent the dream. We know this because later it came true (Deuteronomy 18:21-22). The dream plainly predicted Joseph's supremacy over his brothers. His brothers understood and hated him yet more. In relating the dream, Joseph was not trying to exalt himself. God was revealing His secrets to His humble servant. Looking back on these events in history, we see how God used the brothers' hatred and

jealousy to take Joseph (and later all of Israel) to Egypt. This was necessary so that the future bondage of Israel in Egyptian slavery would provide a type of the bondage of a sinner in sin.

Genesis 37:9-11 God sent another dream to Joseph. This touched his father, Jacob, more closely and drew his rebuke. The dream revealed the brothers, father, and mother all would be made to bow down before Joseph. **His father observed the saying.** He pondered over it. Is not this in accordance with the attitude of Mary, the mother of Jesus, when it is spoken of her that she "pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19), things her Son spoke to her of which she did not understand? Jacob did not understand the dreams, but he kept them in his mind. Things that we do not understand today are our food for tomorrow.

God's Use of Circumstances

God used the evil attitudes of Joseph's brothers to bring about His good purposes. This does not mean it is right to hold sinful feelings and do sinful acts. It just shows that God can turn anything to suit His plans. Sin is always sin, and we are individually held accountable for all we do, regardless of the outcome. If God can turn a *sinful* act to His advantage, how much more can He use a *righteous* one?

Do all dreams come from God? No. Are all dreams a form of prophecy? No. God has given us tests by which we may judge our dreams or those told us. A dream sent by God is a message from Him, hence a form of prophecy.

God-Given Tests

- (1) Does the dream come to pass? (Deuteronomy 18:22).
- (2) Does it lead toward or away from God? Does it agree with the teaching of the Bible? If not, even though it comes to pass, we must not follow it (Deuteronomy 13:1-5).
- (3) How does the dreamer or prophet live or cause others to live? Is his life a pure, holy, God-filled one, and does he lead others to such a life? If not, he does not have God's message (Jeremiah 23:22).

Read Jeremiah 23:13-14. God sent dreams in the Old Testament dispensations, and He sends them in this New Testament time (Acts 2:17). However, dreams coming from God must pass these three tests. Most dreams mean nothing.

Jacob and His Family

If Joseph and his family were living in our day, would not the attitude of the father (showing a difference in love, giving the coat of many colors to Joseph) provoke jealousy and envy in the other children? Was it wise for Jacob to show partiality to Joseph? It made Joseph's life more difficult. Yet, this was only the beginning of the ultimate end planned for Joseph by God.

JUST A THOUGHT

**Keep your words soft and sweet—
you may have to eat them.**



LESSON 2

JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT

Scripture Texts: Genesis 37:12-36; 2 Peter 2:19; Romans 6:16

Let us see how the lines of thought mentioned in Lesson 1 are developing. In this lesson, we see only evil come to Joseph. We must wait and see how God turns it for good.

*MEMORY VERSE: And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, And delivered him out of all his afflictions.
—Acts 7:9-10*

The Growth of Sin

Genesis 37:12-17 When Jacob sent Joseph to learn the welfare of his brothers, who were pasturing the flock far from home, Joseph willingly went. Joseph was conscientious and dependable, or his father would not have entrusted him with this important errand. He sought his brothers in **Shechem** and **Dothan**. Here is a type of Christ's journey to us from our Father. Because of Joseph's position with the father, his brothers were envious.

Genesis 37:18-20 The spirit of the brothers was entirely different from the spirit of Joseph. The hatred in their hearts was active. It had grown until they desired to kill Joseph, **even before he came near**. They would kill him and then lie about it, laying the blame on **some evil beast**. Joseph's dreams were the chief target for bitterness—**Behold this dreamer cometh . . . we shall see what will become of his dreams**. Leaning to their own understanding, they planned to kill the **dreamer** and thus be rid of the **dreams**.

Genesis 37:21-24 A spark of kindness in Reuben's heart held him back from the extreme actions of the others. **Let us not kill him. . . . but cast him into this pit**. Reuben secretly planned to rescue Joseph and return him to their father. God has always had a person in every age and through every circumstance whom He could use to tip the scale of justice. In this case, it was Reuben who started Joseph in the direction God wanted him to go. In years past, many people whom God intended to use were cast low before going on for God. Impossible circumstances that they had no control over enabled them to carry out God's will.

Try to imagine the fierceness and anger with which the brothers stripped the hated **coat of many colours** from Joseph and cast him, without his coat,

into an empty pit. There, he would have died a slow death. Did anything similar happen to Christ?

Genesis 37:25-28 The brothers **sat down to eat bread**. At that moment, a scene met their eyes: camels and merchantmen were traveling to Egypt with their goods. When people plan to do evil, it seems someone will always come along to help them carry out their plans. An idea formed in Judah's mind. They could turn this matter into financial gain and, at the same time, lessen their guilt. Yet, guilt is not this easily wiped away, as we will learn. **Let not our hand be upon him**. Too late, Judah remembered, **He is our brother and our flesh**. So they lifted **Joseph out of the pit** and sold him for **twenty pieces of silver**. The merchants took him away to Egypt, and the brothers must have thought they were free of Joseph and his dreams forever.

We may think we would not have done such a terrible thing! No doubt, in the beginning, Joseph's brothers did not think so either. Sin is a dangerous wilderness. It grows, and if it is in our hearts, we do not know what we may do. Sin binds and controls our every action. The brothers allowed envy and jealousy to abide in their hearts. That grew into hatred, which grew into murder (1 John 3:15).

The Bondage of Sin

Genesis 37:29-32 Reuben's grief at finding Joseph gone seems genuine. **He rent his clothes**—a usual manner of showing sorrow. **The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?** Yes, where? Is this not still the question today? Yet, he kept his brothers' guilty secret. They all covered it with a lie. One sin leads to another. Trying to appear innocent, they brought Joseph's bloody coat to their father.

Genesis 37:33-36 **And he knew it**—Jacob knew it was Joseph's coat, and he believed what his sons intended for him to believe—Joseph was **rent in pieces**. The grief of Jacob was intense. **All his sons and all his daughters** tried to comfort him but failed. Sin brings a grief that man cannot comfort. All Jacob wanted was Joseph—whom he believed he would never see again. He did not know that Joseph was in Egypt and was the property of Potiphar, Pharaoh's captain of the guard.

2 Peter 2:19 Sin binds in many ways. Here, the hated object (Joseph) was now bound more firmly upon the brothers than before. They sinned to rid themselves of Joseph, yet he now loomed larger than ever in their lives. Before, he was a nearby irritant. Now he was a painful guilt within their consciences. Not until they repented, many years later, would that guilt be removed. In the meantime, it brought much suffering. Sin always brings

suffering. Sin always brings bondage. Sin always brings death (Romans 6:16).

JUST A THOUGHT

**If you are looking for trouble,
offer some good advice.**

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LESSON 3

JOSEPH PUT INTO PRISON

Scripture Text: Genesis 39:1-23

So far only evil seems to have come to Joseph. We must wait to see how God turns it for good. God's promises are always perfectly fulfilled.

Joseph's life was a type of the life of Christ. Joseph was hated by his brothers for telling of their sins; Jesus was hated for telling people of their sins (Luke 20:19). Joseph's brothers planned to kill him; Jesus' own people planned and did kill Him (Matthew 27:1-35). Joseph's coat was taken from him; Jesus' coat was taken from Him (John 19:23-24). Joseph was sold by his brothers for twenty pieces of silver; Jesus was sold by one of His disciples for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-15).

MEMORY VERSE: Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. —*Psalm 69:7*

Firmness of Character

Genesis 39:1-6 Joseph was now in Egypt, a slave of Potiphar, Pharaoh's captain of the guard, but **the Lord was with Joseph**. Joseph was blessed by the Lord—God gave success in all he did. Potiphar recognized this and trusted him with all of his business. Joseph's prosperity extended to Potiphar. **The Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake**. Joseph was good-looking and intelligent.

Genesis 39:7-10 Joseph's pleasing qualities drew the notice of Potiphar's wife. She, not being a good person, enticed him to sin with her. **But he refused**. For two reasons, such an act was detestable to him.

- (1) It would be a betrayal of his master's trust.
- (2) It would be a sin against God.

We live in an evil world. The powers of darkness surround us and are constantly striving to pull us down into doubt, discouragement, and backsliding. This lesson about Joseph should encourage us. Everything was dark around him. All seemed to be going wrong. Apparently, no question entered Joseph's mind about how he should answer the temptation that came to him. He was decided, and no persuasion could change his stand. No price was too

great for him to pay to remain on the side of the right. Property, comfort, reputation, position—all could go—he still would obey God.

Fleeing Temptation

Genesis 39:11-16 The devil is persistent. This woman was not easily turned from her evil desires. One day, finding Joseph alone, **she caught him by his garment** and repeated her sinful urging. Quickly, Joseph slipped out of his coat **and fled, and got him out**. In frustration, the wicked woman turned to revenge. She called others and gave a false account, accusing Joseph of the crime of which she was guilty. As proof, she showed the garment she held and claimed Joseph left it when startled by her cry for help.

Genesis 39:17-20 Potiphar came home and his wife reported this news to him. His trusted servant was untrue, and the proof before his eyes was the abandoned garment! A little truth mixed into a lie makes it more deadly. Potiphar's **wrath was kindled**, and he put Joseph **into the prison**.

Genesis 39:21-23 Things seemed to be going from bad to worse for Joseph. He was sold from his home, taken to Egypt, became a slave, and then a prisoner, but through it all, Joseph held steady. He was determined not to sin whatever happened. He kept his trust in God.

Decisions like Joseph's are seldom made at the sudden moment of crisis. We cannot think deep and straight then. The decision must be made before. Only the manner of following it can be chosen at the time of temptation. Outward circumstances looked bad. Inside, where it mattered most, all was well with Joseph, for **the LORD was with Joseph**.

Refusing to Sin

How can we make the right decision, or choose the right side, when so many differing voices advise us? Joseph looked heavenward. He did not consider changing times, the customs of society, what was expedient, or what would put him in the right with his owner. All he considered was what was right in God's sight. When we determine to choose right, shun sin, and look for the right way, the Bible and the Holy Spirit will lead us there.

People, young and old, who wish to avoid falling into sin, should take a lesson from Joseph. He not only refused to commit the sin the woman suggested, he also refused **to be with her**. If you do not want to steal, lie, tell filthy stories, commit fornication, drink, or smoke, then you must not spend time with the people who do. If you do not wish to read ungodly literature, keep it out of your house. Companions who must be "kept in line" are not fit

companions. Spend time with good people, talk of good things, and surround yourself with influences that lead toward God and right (Philippians 4:8-9). Pursue holy living and flee from all suggestions of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Keep away from any place that may tempt you to do evil.

The question is often asked, "What is the use of doing right when it brings no worldly advantages?" Doing right put Joseph in prison, but it also gave him a clear conscience, the smile of God, and the confidence of the prison keeper. These priceless possessions were immediate. To come later were more blessings that would have been lost had Joseph yielded to sin.

Joseph kept his trust in God, and **the LORD was with Joseph**. The blessings came later, but victory was won during those dark hours. During those long dark hours that grew into years, Joseph formed a strong sense of values.

JUST A THOUGHT

One thing you can give and still keep is your word.



LESSON 4

JOSEPH INTERPRETS DREAMS

Scripture Texts: Genesis 40:1-23; 2 Peter 1:20-21

From previous lessons, we can see God was watching over Joseph. He was with him; He prospered his work; and He enabled him to do right despite temptation to evil. The dreams are not yet fulfilled, but Joseph, as a type of Christ, is seen because Joseph was tempted and did not yield to the temptation. Jesus was tempted by Satan and did not yield (Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4:15).

MEMORY VERSE: I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. —Psalm 18:3

Interpretations Belong to God

Genesis 40:1-8 Joseph, a prisoner himself, was an overseer of Pharaoh's prisoners. Two prisoners brought in and placed in Joseph's charge were Pharaoh's butler and baker. Each of these men dreamed on the same night, and they were troubled by the dreams. Noticing their sad faces, Joseph inquired about the reason. They said they had dreamed, and there was no interpreter. From that, it would appear dreams with meanings were more frequent at that time, or that these people were superstitiously practicing the interpretation of dreams. Since God sent these dreams, as we later learn, perhaps He filled these men with a desire for an interpretation. "**Do not interpretations belong to God?**" asked Joseph. He claimed no power in himself but looked to God for it. He asked to hear the dreams.

Genesis 40:9-11 The butler told his dream of a grapevine. He saw the entire process from budding, to ripe grapes, to the pouring of the juice into Pharaoh's cup. (The butler was a manservant in charge of wines and liquors.)

Genesis 40:12-15 This is the interpretation. From Joseph's statement that interpretations belong to God, we know he looked to Him for the interpretation. **The three branches are three days.** In three days, the butler was to be taken from the prison and restored to his position as Pharaoh's butler.

Then, Joseph requested of the butler, "Will you **make mention of me unto Pharaoh?** Will you tell him how I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews (was sold by those who had no right to sell) and was innocent of the crime for which I was imprisoned? Will you ask Pharaoh to release me from the

prison?" We find no promise that the butler would do so.

Genesis 40:16-19 Encouraged by the happy meaning of the butler's dream, the baker told his dream. Joseph interpreted his dream as well. Although it was unfavorable to the baker, Joseph's interpretation was as honest and sincere as was his interpretation to the butler. A true man of God will tell the truth as it is, regardless of the result to the hearer.

Interpretations belong to God. Joseph here voiced a principle that should be universally known and followed. God, being the Almighty Creator, knows the meaning of all things. What man should know, God can tell him. When God sends a dream or a prophecy, He is the only One who can explain it. It is useless, and certainly wrong, to turn to mediums, fortunetellers, or purely human sources for the meaning. Although it may be laced with some element of truth, they can only give a guess, which is of no value, or give the answer of an evil spirit, which is dangerous. Some truth mixed with erroneous teaching causes it to be more deceptive and dangerous. If God sent the message, He will reveal to us the meaning when we look to Him for it.

2 Peter 1:20-21 When God gives us a doctrine, the interpretation belongs to Him. He has given both doctrines and explanations in the Bible. He tells us that **no prophecy (a message from God to man) of the scripture is of any private interpretation.** For it **came not . . . by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.** The attempt to make private interpretations causes the multitude of denominations today, each with its different version of doctrine. Each may be drawn from the Bible but changed by varied interpretations.

If we remember **interpretations belong to God** and go to His inspired Word for the explanation of doctrine, we will have much more vital teachings and a greater unity.

Genesis 40:20-23 Anyone could make such predictions, but will they come true? The proof is the outcome. **And it came to pass . . .** Pharaoh celebrated his birthday on the third day after the dreams. He gave a feast for his servants and sent for his butler and baker to be brought from prison. He did exactly as Joseph had told. He **restored the chief butler unto his butlership again . . . he hanged the chief baker.** The only reason for this is that God sent the dreams, and God gave the interpretations.

Trusting in God

As we look at Joseph, we may wonder how he stayed righteous despite continual hardship and discouragement. His courage and strength came from his trust in God. His was not a vague, nominal trust, but a living one. It

controlled his thinking and his actions. His first thought was not to try to figure things out for himself. He turned immediately to God because his trust was in Him, and God did not fail Joseph.

Why do we so often turn first to earthly resources, to men, medicine, the law, friends, our reasoning, or striving in our strength only to fail? It is because we do not trust in God.

Gratitude

Now, it was well with the butler. He could have repaid Joseph's kindness by speaking to Pharaoh in his favor, but he did not. He forgot him, and Joseph was left in prison. The butler probably meant to present Joseph's case to Pharaoh, but he was so absorbed in his own affairs that another's trouble did not affect him deeply. The fact is, he was ungrateful. Gratitude is a necessary virtue in the making of a complete Christian character. Gratitude is thankfulness joined with a desire to benefit those who have benefitted us. Our gratitude is due—first to God and then to all those who have helped bless our lives. The love of God in the heart makes gratitude a natural feeling. Then the thought and the will join in gratitude's fulfillment.

JUST A THOUGHT

The formula for failure: Try to please everybody.

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LESSON 5

JOSEPH INTERPRETS PHARAOH'S DREAM

Scripture Text: Genesis 41

God was with Joseph. He gave him the interpretations of the dreams. The dreams of the butler and the baker were fulfilled exactly as Joseph had said. Joseph suffered many things by which his faith was tested and his life refined.

The outcome of God's plan for Joseph is not yet apparent, but all these happenings were shaping to bring it to pass. The dreams and Joseph's interpretation of them are necessary to God's purpose.

MEMORY VERSE: *In all thy ways acknowledge him; and he shall direct thy paths.* —Proverbs 3:6

Humility

Genesis 41:1-16 Two years after the butler returned to Pharaoh's service, Pharaoh had a dream. It troubled him greatly. He inquired of all the magicians and wise men of Egypt, but none could interpret the dream. Worldly minds cannot yet interpret God's message. Then, the butler remembered Joseph had asked him to intercede for him with Pharaoh. The butler neglected to do so. Now he told Pharaoh of Joseph and his interpretations. He explained how they came to pass. Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and **they brought him hastily**. Joseph made himself as presentable as possible and came. Pharaoh said, "**I have heard . . . that thou canst understand a dream.**" Joseph answered, "**It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.**"

He was the same humble Joseph. Even after years spent wrongfully in prison, he showed no bitterness because he had none. Humility is the lack of self-exaltation. It is not thinking lowly of oneself; rather, it is not thinking of oneself at all. It is the disposition to give honor to another. Joseph showed this virtue when Pharaoh told him he heard of his ability to interpret dreams. "**It is not in me,**" said Joseph, "**God . . .**" Joseph recognized the truth that the power is all God's. No special credit is due to Joseph for this attitude. It is the only right attitude to hold.

How many of us might have said, "I have had some success in that line"? Some might even have advertised as a "gifted interpreter of dreams." If so,

we would have lost the opportunity of being a channel through which God's power would flow. How much, do you suppose, of the manifestation of God's power in the world is thwarted by the attempt of some human to take honor to himself? This is a grievous sin. Desire for honor hinders faith (John 5:44).

Joseph Reveals God's Plan

Genesis 41:17-32 Pharaoh recounted his dreams to Joseph. He saw seven fat cattle come out of the river, followed by seven skinny (lean) cattle that **did eat up** the fat cattle. After this, he dreamed again and saw seven full ears of corn on one stalk. After them, **seven thin ears** came up, and they **devoured the seven . . . full ears**. (Corn here represents all types of grain.)

Joseph told Pharaoh that the dream came from God to show Pharaoh what He was going to do. It was given unto Pharaoh twice (given in two parts) because it was **established** (unchangeably decided), and God would soon bring it to pass. Joseph gave the meaning. The first seven cattle and seven good ears were the seven years of plenty coming throughout Egypt. In those years, food would grow in abundance. The seven lean cattle and seven empty ears were seven years of famine that would follow the good years. During those years, no food would grow. The famine would be so serious that all the plenty would be forgotten. Joseph proved he was God's man by truthfully revealing God's plan. There was only one interpretation of the dream, and only God's man had it. Pharaoh believed fully God's plan for Egypt that Joseph gave.

A Glorious Promotion

Genesis 41:33-36 After the interpretation, Joseph gave advice. He proposed Pharaoh should choose **a man discreet** (having discernment, able to avoid error or evil, careful, and prudent) **and wise** to gather and store food during **the seven plenteous years** to be used in **the seven years of famine**. Under him would be officers to help in the gathering.

Genesis 41:37-45 The plan won Pharaoh's favor. He felt Joseph was the man best fitted for the position of food administrator. He recognized the large place God held in Joseph's life—**a man in whom the spirit of God is . . . God hath shewed thee all this**. So Pharaoh appointed Joseph as ruler of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself. He dressed Joseph in **fine linen**, **and put a gold chain about his neck**. He had Joseph ride in **the second chariot**. Pharaoh took off his signet **ring from his hand** and gave it to Joseph, giving him authority to do business for the king, and presented him

with a wife (a type of our salvation). He gave him power and authority, sending runners before him to command the people to **bow the knee** (another type).

Where in all of history do we find another man's rise to power comparable to this? Joseph was advanced in one day from prison to the second in command in the land. He was a foreigner, and he had not sought or worked for or even known of the promotion until it was done (another type).

Genesis 41:46-49 Joseph began his work when he was thirty years old. Christ began His ministry when He was thirty years old. During the first seven years, Joseph traveled about Egypt gathering corn into the cities. It grew so abundantly that he ceased to keep an account of it.

Genesis 41:54-57 Seven years of dearth (scarcity, want, lack) **began to come**, just as Joseph said. All lands felt the famine. Egypt alone had bread. When the stores of the people gave out, they applied to Pharaoh, who sent them to Joseph. Joseph sold to them and to people of other countries from the storehouses of grain he had gathered. Likewise, Christ has set up a storehouse to feed His people for seven ages (the seven days of the Gospel Day; Isaiah 30:26). It was not Joseph; only God could have done this. Joseph was only the yielded tool. Yet, without Joseph's yielding, God's plan would have failed. Had Joseph allowed bitterness into his life or had he become discouraged, given up, sought his own honor, or in any way fallen into sin, this blessing would never have come to him or his people. Let us watch that we do not frustrate the grace of God (Galatians 2:21).

JUST A THOUGHT

**A failure is a man who goes through life
earning nothing but money.**



LESSON 6

A BUSINESS TRIP INTO EGYPT

Scripture Text: Genesis 42

Joseph's dreams are beginning to be fulfilled. His brothers bowed to the earth before Joseph. He had dominion over them. Joseph provided physical food for them; Jesus provides spiritual food for us. Joseph began a test of his brothers; Jesus proves us by testing. Joseph's brothers are being led to repentance. They acknowledge their guilt to themselves, which is the first step to salvation.

MEMORY VERSE: But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. —Philippians 4:19

Bearing Responsibility

Genesis 42:1-4 Joseph sold corn to those who were suffering from famine. Back in Canaan, Jacob's family faced starvation. Jacob sent his ten sons to buy corn in Egypt. But Benjamin, the youngest, he kept at home, **lest peradventure mischief befall him**. Jacob remembered with pain a time when he had sent another young son on an errand from which he never returned.

Genesis 42:5-16 When the brothers reached Joseph, they did not know him. His dress, his position, and the years that had passed kept them from recognizing him, but Joseph knew them. They **bowed down themselves before him**. **And Joseph remembered the dreams** (read Genesis 37:5-10). A plan formed in his mind. He would test his brothers. He would give them an opportunity to prove themselves trustworthy. He accused them of being spies and professed doubt of their account concerning their family and mission in Egypt. The mention of a younger brother remaining at home gave Joseph an opening. He told them they must bring that youngest brother to Egypt. To ensure their bringing him, he would keep all the brothers in prison except for one who would be sent to bring Benjamin.

Genesis 42:17-20 After keeping all the brothers for three days, Joseph relented a little. He would keep only one brother while the rest went for Benjamin. Thus, their families could receive food. If they brought the brother, they would not be punished as spies. **This do, and live; for I fear God**. Saying this, Joseph gave testimony of the faith in his Father that He would deliver.

Everyone coming to Christ has a little "Benjamin" in his or her life that

they are trying to hold back. In every case, God knows what it is, and He holds back something from us until we bring this little "Benjamin" to Him.

Genesis 42:21-24 The brothers talked together in Hebrew, thinking Joseph could not understand them. Looking into themselves for the reason for their trouble (the first place all should look), they thought they found it in their act of selling Joseph. They laid it all bare—their knowledge of his anguish, their hardhearted deafness to his pleadings, and their lie to their father. **We are verily guilty . . .** Reuben recalled his advice against the act. **Ye would not hear. Therefore, . . . his blood is required.** Joseph understood. His tender heart was touched, and he withdrew to weep. When he returned, he bound Simeon for imprisonment.

One bad trait of human nature is the disposition to shift blame upon others. Some children are not trained to bear responsibility for their acts but are allowed to go on their way, leaving their mistakes to be cleared up by someone else. Joseph's brothers seem to have asked first, "What have we done that caused this trouble?" They found the fault in themselves. Their guilt brought their distress. This confession to themselves was the first step toward confession to God and to the injured ones.

To be saved, we must first acknowledge ourselves to be sinners. A disposition to bear responsibility for our acts makes this acknowledgment much easier. Training our children to accept the results of their acts and not to shift blame for them will help them open their hearts to repentance.

The Goodness and Severity of Joseph

Genesis 42:25-28 Joseph sent them away with sacks of food, the payment money hidden in the sacks, and provision for the journey home. While stopping along the way, to their dismay, money was found in one's sack, with no explanation for it being there. **Their heart failed them, and they were afraid.** Their recent difficulties joined with their guilty consciences to cause great fear. Yet, we see a better side to their character. They were reverently conscious of God's hand in their lives. **What is this that God hath done?** (The influence of a godly upbringing will bring the thought of God to one's remembrance.)

We see kindness in Joseph's decision to imprison only one brother rather than nine. He had concern that their families receive the much-needed food. He wept upon hearing his brothers acknowledge their guilt. He gave gifts to each of them. He invited them back and gave them an incentive to return.

We find a quality of severity in Joseph's sternness. We see it in his making himself strange and speaking roughly to his brothers, in his accusation

of them, in his binding of Simeon, and in his demand that they bring Benjamin. Why did he do this? He knew it would bring suffering to his father as well as to his brothers. Was it not for the purpose of testing them? The blessing to be gained if they proved true would be great enough to warrant the suffering. God is love, yet He tests us. He allows us to suffer many hard things of life so that we may prove true. By chastening His children, God develops the best in them. The Christian life calls for real manhood and womanhood, people who are willing to stand alone and face the tests courageously and honestly.

A True Commitment

Genesis 42:29-38 Reaching home, the brothers told all to Jacob, their father. When they discovered all their money, they were again afraid. Jacob was very distressed at the demand to send Benjamin. He could see his children being taken from him one by one—Joseph, Simeon, and now Benjamin. No, he would not let him go. Reuben offered the lives of his two sons as surety that he would bring Benjamin safely back. What more could he offer? This was his best.

For twenty years and more, Joseph's brothers had carried guilty consciences. They had hated Joseph, sold him, and lied about it to their father. They had exchanged an annoyance with their brother for bitterness and the fear of guilt. Nothing else can give the pain that a guilty conscience brings. Nothing can remove it but repentance, washing in the blood of Christ, and committing our all to Him. Jesus promises "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (Revelation 3:21).

JUST A THOUGHT

**Too many folks these days expect to get to the
Promised Land without making any promises.**



LESSON 7

JOSEPH'S BROTHERS RETURN TO EGYPT

Scripture Text: Genesis 43

Things do not seem to be going well for the brothers now. Joseph's dreams are beginning to be fulfilled. His father and mother, as well as his brothers, now bow to his wishes. He has dominion over them. They are being tested by Joseph, but they do not realize it. Step by step, God's plan is taking shape. We see a little of the working but not the purpose as yet.

MEMORY VERSE: Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. —Psalm 37:5

Let Benjamin Go

Genesis 43:1-7 The second trip to Egypt for corn was delayed while Jacob's sons urged their father to send Benjamin along. They pointed out again that Joseph had demanded it—**Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.**

Genesis 43:8-10 Judah pointed out the prospect of starvation if they did not buy more food. He offered to be personally responsible for Benjamin. It was a big promise, but he meant it, as we shall later see. Judah remembered, with painful remorse, a time when he failed to bring a brother home.

Genesis 43:11-15 Jacob yielded, not willingly but out of necessity. He advised them to take a present to Joseph so that the best possible treatment could be received. **Take also your brother.** Jacob finally relented. Sadly, many people, even knowing for certain what God requires of them, continue to withhold that one thing. They gladly give anything but the Benjamin in their lives that God wants. Many will face spiritual starvation before they will let Benjamin go. It is best to, through love, let go of what God has asked of us, not because we feel that we are forced into a corner by circumstances.

Jacob felt the loss of his children would be the worst bereavement he could suffer. **I am bereaved.** Children are given to us as a trust from God. Each is a soul who will continue to live forever and ever. Parents should consider it a great privilege to guide that soul into the path of God and Heaven. No loss can surpass the loss of a child to the clutches of Satan. Yet, it is happening in too many cases. We are living in those perilous times of the last days (2 Timothy, Chapter 3), a time when children will be disobedient to

parents, and parents and children will be without natural affection. The sad part is that many parents who are neglecting and losing their children do not realize their bereavement. If parents do not return to bringing their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, the end can only be the eternal loss of many souls. That is a much greater bereavement than the loss of physical lives.

All at once, the brothers were living careful lives, paying attention to details. Besides the **present**, Jacob told them to take back **double money**—the payment for food from the previous trip that had been found in their sacks (**peradventure it was an oversight**) and money to buy more corn. Most valuable, they were to take their brother, Benjamin. Jacob added a prayer that **God Almighty give you mercy** and send his sons home safely.

Dining With the King

Genesis 43:16-25 Upon coming to Egypt, the brothers stood before Joseph. When Joseph saw Benjamin (he saw his brothers had been obedient), he ordered them taken to his house for dinner. Nothing short of obedience will allow us to sup with Christ (Revelation 3:20). This frightened the brothers. They feared a trick. They hastened to explain to Joseph's steward how they had found the money and that they had brought it back. They truthfully told how they did not know how it came in their sacks. The steward reassured them. **Peace be to you, fear not: your God . . . hath given you treasure in your sacks.**

By the brothers bringing Benjamin, Joseph's requirement was met. Accordingly, Simeon was freed and reunited with his brothers. They cleaned up and **made ready the present** for Joseph.

True Love

Genesis 43:26-31 Joseph came and inquired after their father. **Is your father . . . yet alive?** Answering, they bowed again **and made obeisance**. No doubt, Joseph remembered his dreams once again. The fulfillment proved the dreams had come from God. More fulfillments would follow. Then, Joseph looked at Benjamin—his mother's son, his only full brother. After greeting him with a blessing, Joseph had to hurry out. The longing in his heart brought tears, and he dared not yet reveal himself to his brothers. He must complete the testing of them. **He entered into his chamber, and wept.** Then, washing away the tears, he gained control of his emotions and came out for dinner.

To tell his brothers would have thwarted Joseph's purpose, but if they had known the love in his heart while he spoke roughly to them, they could have borne the testing without fear. If they had known the purpose of the hard things he made them bear and what the outcome would be, they could have stood the test with courage. God tests His children (Hebrews 12:5-7). If you remember God loves you, the outcome will be glorious. Joseph showed no resentful attitude toward his brothers, who had wronged him because he had none.

An Obvious Change

Genesis 43:32-34 There were three tables—one for the brothers who were Hebrews, one for the Egyptians who would not eat with Hebrews, and the third table was for Joseph because of his position. The brothers' seating in order of age caused the men to marvel. How did Joseph know? In the serving of the meal, Benjamin was favored above the rest. **And they drank, and were merry with him.** It was obvious to Joseph that his brothers were not jealous of Benjamin as they once were of him. They had passed another portion of their test.

JUST A THOUGHT

**A true test of character is not how you are on your best days,
but how you act on your worst days.**



LESSON 8

JOSEPH TRIES HIS BROTHERS

Scripture Text: Genesis 44:1-17

The brothers bowed and made obeisance as God had foretold in Joseph's dreams. In Joseph's tears and kindness, we see his love for his brothers, although it was joined with strict holding to his purpose of testing them. Christ loves us. His love is joined with His strict purpose that we shall be an honor unto Him in righteousness (1 Peter 1:7).

MEMORY VERSE: Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.
—James 1:12

Making the Right Choice

Genesis 44:1-3 After the noon meal with his brothers as guests, Joseph gave orders to his stewards to prepare the grain they would take home. He sent as much as they could carry. He also, unbeknown to his brothers, instructed every man's money to be put **in his sack's mouth**, as was done before. A third and most surprising order was that Joseph's silver cup was to be put into Benjamin's sack. Joseph was about to complete the testing of his brothers. In the early morning, the brothers started home. No doubt, they felt pleased to be leaving with both Simeon and Benjamin and without trouble.

Genesis 44:4-10 As they were traveling, Joseph sent his steward to overtake them. The steward confronted the brothers and accused them of stealing the silver cup. Why had they been so ungrateful as to repay good with evil? Did they not realize the value of the cup? The brothers were so sure of their innocence that they made an extreme offer. If the cup were found, the one who had it would be killed and all the others be made slaves. The steward, knowing where the cup was, softened the sentence somewhat. **With whom it is found shall be my servant.** Only the thief should be made a slave. The others could go free.

Genesis 44:11-13 Quickly and confidently, they opened their sacks. They would prove the steward was mistaken. Imagine their amazement when the last sack was searched and there was the silver cup in Benjamin's sack! **They rent their clothes** (a sign of mourning) and returned to Joseph's house in grief and fear. They were in the midst of the final phase of the test, but did

not know it. How would they meet it? At least, they were not abandoning Benjamin, as they had Joseph, but had they repented? Were they changed men?

Joseph's method seemed very harsh, but he had a plan, and he held to it strictly. His tender heart ached many times as he saw his brothers' anguish and knew his father suffered likewise. He had to hide his anguish. It would have been easier for him to tell them in the beginning who he was and let all be happy together. But there were conditions inside their hearts that needed to be changed. The brothers needed to uncover their sin. Merely covering over sin never takes away its sting. They needed to gain peace and confidence by meeting and overcoming temptation. No one but God could help them with this. Joseph hoped they would choose the right way, but he could not help them make that choice. They must meet the hard things alone. To be of any worth, the choice must be wholly their own. Joseph would not rob them of that opportunity.

God has given us freedom of will. He sets before us right and wrong, life and death. The choice is wholly ours. He gives us many hard trials in this life so that we may have the joy, strength, and peace of heart that will come with gaining victory over them. Will we choose to do right, though it is hard, and gain the victory? Or will we take the wrong and weak way to failure and defeat?

Giving Account

Genesis 44:14-17 Joseph was waiting for them. **They fell before him on the ground.** Their bowing was becoming increasingly humble. Now it was more than being polite, it was pleading in desperation. Joseph held his stern manner. Did they think they could deceive him? Judah spoke. His promises to his father made him the most responsible (Genesis 43:9).

What shall we say? . . . How shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity. The brothers had no defense. They made no excuse. They offered that all would become servants of Joseph. Surely, Joseph knew his words sent an arrow straight into the heart of each brother. He would keep the thief only. The others could go home **in peace unto thy father.** Yet, what peace could they ever have, especially in their father's presence, if they returned without Benjamin?

The brothers returned to Joseph's house to give an account to him (a man) for one act. Some day, we all must give an account to the all-knowing God for our entire lives. If we come in repentance now and have our sins covered by the blood of Jesus, we will be ready on that day to give a good account.

Conviction of Sin

Joseph's part in the test was over. Now it was up to his brothers. He had laid before them the perfect opportunity to save themselves and let their brother Benjamin suffer, as they had with Joseph. Or they could face up to their responsibilities and protect the brother at their own expense. Which would it be? Would they take the first choice and fail, or the second and win a priceless victory? It all depended upon whether they had repentance in their hearts for that earlier sin. Joseph waited.

The brothers had felt the conviction of their sin before when Joseph kept Simeon as a hostage. They felt it continuously beginning with seeing their father's grief over Joseph until now. A guilty conscience is a bitter companion. Now it rose to a crisis point. They felt their sin was against God. **God hath found out the iniquity.** Conviction served its purpose. They were ready to lay bare their sin in confession.

Confession of Sin

Conviction of sin, if obeyed as God means it to be, leads to confession. Judah spoke out and acknowledged their sin. He made no excuse for it. He just laid bare the fact. He owned the sin and confessed helplessness to clear themselves. This led to the brothers giving themselves up to Joseph. **We are my lord's servants.** They were cast upon Joseph's mercy for whatever he would do with them. When we give ourselves up to God like that, He will save us.

JUST A THOUGHT

Many people suffer poor health, not because of what they eat but because of what is eating them.

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LESSON 9

JUDAH PLEADS FOR BENJAMIN

Scripture Text: Genesis 44:18-34

Again Joseph's brothers fell before him as the dreams revealed they would. Joseph tested his brothers; God tests us. The brothers were accountable to Joseph; we must all give account to Christ. The brothers confessed to Joseph that they were sinners; we must confess to God (Proverbs 28:13).

Conviction led the brothers to confess to Joseph. Conviction is a step toward salvation, leading one to confess to God (1 John 1:9). They yielded to Joseph to serve him. To be saved, we must yield ourselves to serve God (Romans 6:13).

MEMORY VERSE: He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. —Proverbs 28:13

Sin's Reaping Time

Joseph awaited his brothers' response. What kind of men were they? Had they repented of their treatment of Joseph years before? He did not have long to wait.

Genesis 44:18-23 Then Judah came near unto him. He drew nearer than ever before and spoke with deep feeling and surrender. He begged to be heard without anger. He first reminded Joseph that his own questioning had led him to know of Benjamin. Joseph's own exacting demand had brought Benjamin here. He pointed out seven facts to touch Joseph's heart with pity. Their father was **an old man**. Benjamin was **a child of his old age**. He was **a little one**, or young. **His brother is dead**. (He meant Joseph, Benjamin's only full brother. Jacob believed him to be dead.) Benjamin **alone is left of his mother** (of Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife.) **His father loveth him**. (Judah remembered with pain the realization of his father's deep love for Joseph when they came home without him.) If he should leave his father, **his father would die**.

Genesis 44:24-29 Now Judah told of the discussion at home—the need to buy more food, the demand that Benjamin be brought, and their father's objection because of the former loss of Joseph. The added loss of Benjamin would cause his death. Judah did not say what had happened to Joseph, but quoted his father's supposition that **he is torn in pieces**.

What gave urgency to Judah's passionate plea? Was it not the pain of the

guilty consciences the brothers had carried for over twenty years? The memory of their sin in selling Joseph and the resulting grief to their father gave them a fear of ever repeating such a wrong. The sin was done in a few hours, but the reaping lasted their lifetimes. It is always so.

Thank God, sin can be forgiven, but it leaves scars that can never be removed and spreads seeds that bring forth many a bitter harvest. If we could only realize this when we are young, as we will when we are older! If we would heed the Bible and "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth" (Ecclesiastes 12:1), we would avoid many sins with their dreadful consequences. Let us sow to the Spirit and reap life everlasting (Galatians 6:7-8).

Judah Hands in the Test Paper

Genesis 44:30-32 Judah explained his own position. His father's life was so **bound up in the lad's life** that should the brothers return without Benjamin, they would be guilty of bringing his **gray hairs . . . with sorrow to the grave**. He did not say this would be the second time of bringing such sorrow to him, but we can rest assured this thought was heavy in his own heart and mind. Judah told how he had bound himself to bring Benjamin safely home to his father or **bear the blame to him for ever**.

Genesis 44:33-34 Judah begged to stay instead of Benjamin. He would be a **bondman**, or a slave, to Joseph. He asked that Benjamin be allowed to go home with his brothers. **For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me?** It would be easier for him to be a slave than to see the grief of his father again.

The test was over. The brothers did better the second time in their stewardship than they did in the first. Joseph—they had hated and sold. Benjamin—they cared for and protected. Joseph could see what kind of men his brothers were. Not only that, but he had given them the opportunity to meet temptation and have victory over it. Now they could have more courage and confidence to go forward. They had faced the temptation to sacrifice a brother to their own benefit as once before. They had refused, choosing rather to suffer themselves. What will Joseph answer? Will they pass the test?

Did this faithfulness wipe out the brothers' previous unfaithfulness? No, God does not balance good deeds against bad ones and count the person on the side of the most. No amount of goodness can cancel even one sin. The only way to wipe it out is by repentance and the washing of the blood of Christ.

Parental Stewardship

"Children are an heritage of the LORD" (Psalm 127:3). We do not own them. They are entrusted to us from God. Each one is a soul who must return to Him. We are to care for them as the most precious trust we have. In our hands is the preparing of them to return to Him. We cannot choose for them, but we have a great influence in their choice (Proverbs 22:6). The training is much more important than the teaching. First, we teach. We say, "Be honest, do not steal." Then we watch over them to train them in honesty. If one slips a piece of candy from his brother or a friend, we see he returns it or repays it with some of his own. So it is with all the virtues.

From earliest babyhood, we take them on our laps and talk and sing and read and pray. We teach them in daily family worship. We train them by seeing they put all else aside and listen quietly. We train them to follow the instructions they have learned. We train them by turning with them to the Bible for answers to their problems. This is the plan for all who would be successful parents. It is not a plan that can be done through babysitters. It is one for love and care and watchfulness and prayer and trust in God. Judah said, "**How shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me?** How shall we go up to God, our Father, without our children?"

JUST A THOUGHT

**When a man tries himself, the verdict
is usually in his favor.**



LESSON 10

JOSEPH REVEALS HIS IDENTITY

Scripture Text: Genesis 45

The brothers' subjection to Joseph was nearly completed. Judah showed surrender, acknowledgment of sin and helplessness, and a willingness to give up all. These are attitudes necessary to salvation. Judah had finished his plea to Joseph with a request to stay as a slave in Benjamin's place. Now, Joseph knew his brothers were faithful to their trust.

MEMORY VERSE: Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.
—Psalm 26:2

Forgiveness

Genesis 45:1-8 Joseph's heart was touched. He could no longer control his emotions. He sent the Egyptian servants out of his presence and broke into loud weeping. Great love for his father is shown in his repeated asking, **I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?** This news left his brothers speechless. First, they were surprised to find Joseph here. Second, they were **troubled**, and they drew back. What would Joseph do in revenge for this sin against him? But Joseph called them nearer. He saw their fear and hastened to calm it. **Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves.** Here is kindness and forgiveness. **God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity . . . and to save your lives.** When a guilty conscience causes us to shrink away from Christ, He calls us closer to Him. Here, we find trust in God and deep reverence. Joseph acknowledged God in all of his ways, and God blessed him. He attributed all his promotion in Egypt to God. At the same time, he generously took all the blame from his brothers.

Joseph had been greatly wronged—sold into slavery by his own brothers. Christ was wronged by His own people (John 1:11). Joseph held no bitterness in his heart toward them or Potiphar's wife or the butler. Joseph had many happenings in his life where it would have been easy for him to give in to resentment which, if left alone, will always grow into bitterness. He forgave them before they asked. He wished them to have no sorrow or regret (anger with themselves). Joseph loved his brothers. Christ forgives sinners (1 John 1:9). Joseph counted it a blessing to be used by God to preserve their lives. His forgiveness was not in words only, but complete and from the heart. This

is the kind of forgiveness we get from God. It is the kind we must have for others if we are to receive it.

Joseph came into Egypt to save physical lives. Christ came into the world to save souls (1 Timothy 1:15).

Something for the Brothers to Do

Genesis 45:9-15 Joseph had something for his brothers to do. They were to carry an invitation to their father. They were to tell him that Joseph was **lord of all Egypt**—made so by God. They were to tell Jacob to move to Egypt with all of his family and possessions. They would make a home in Goshen, a rich section of Egypt, and Joseph would see that they were provided for throughout the remaining years of famine.

Joseph gave his father and brothers a home where he was. Christ will take His people to an eternal home with Him (John 14:3). When Christ saves us, He always gives us something to do. We all have a part in taking the Gospel message to others that they, too, can come to Him and be fed at His storehouse.

After giving them this message, Joseph embraced and kissed his brothers **and wept upon them**, beginning with Benjamin. Then the brothers felt more at ease. (Do you remember how much more at ease you felt toward Christ when He forgave you?) **After that his brethren talked with him.** Oh! How much each of them had to talk about. After Christ, saves us, we have much to talk to Him about in prayer every day.

All Things Are Made Ready

Genesis 45:16-20 The message went to Pharaoh—**Joseph's brethren are come.** Pharaoh was **pleased** and sent an invitation to Joseph's family to come to Egypt. He did good things for them because of his love and respect for Joseph. God saves us for Christ's sake. Pharaoh wanted them to have the best of everything. He promised **wagons** to move them and new furnishings so they need not move theirs. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

How could any of Joseph's family refuse the invitation? Everything they would need was being supplied by Joseph. Christ never sends a messenger out until He has supplied all he will need for the work he has been called upon to do.

An Unusual Scene

Genesis 45:21-28 The plan was carried out. Joseph sent wagons and provided his brothers with food and animal feed for the way and changes of clothing for themselves. Christ does this for us when we are saved. He takes our old garment and gives us a white robe. On the first trip home, they returned with **sacks** full. On this trip, they went home with **wagons** full. Cautioning them to be careful, Joseph sent them on their happy mission. Try to visualize this group as they were homeward bound. When they told their father the news that Joseph still lived and ruled in Egypt and had sent for him, Jacob could not believe it. Only when he saw the wagons sent by Joseph did he believe and prepare to go to see him. The way we believe or disbelieve a message determines our response to it.

It is doubtful that anywhere in history there is another story such as this. For a foreigner, slave, and prisoner to immediately and directly be raised to a position of such great power and trust is strange indeed. But this is just what happens to each one who comes to Christ and is saved from sin. It was more than a perfect coincidence of a number of occurrences. It could never have come about except by the work of God. He caused the chain of events. He was able to accomplish it because His servant, Joseph, trusted Him and obeyed Him, even when all looked hopeless. He went to extremes in it, holding back nothing. If we will trust and obey, God will work through us in a marvelous way too. We have His promise.

JUST A THOUGHT

**To err is human;
to remain in error is foolish.**



LESSON 11

JACOB GOES TO EGYPT

Scripture Texts: Genesis 46:1-4, 28-34; 47:1-31

The experience of the brothers is a type of salvation. They were forgiven their sin by Joseph, the one they had sinned against. Their needs were supplied by him. They were promised a home near him. They were sent to tell others to come to him. Saints are forgiven by God whom they have sinned against (Romans 5:8). Their needs are supplied by Him (Philippians 4:19). They are promised a home with Him (John 14:3). They are sent out to tell others how to come to this home (Mark 16:15-16).

We can now see God working out His purposes. His plan for bringing the Israelites into Egypt is progressing.

MEMORY VERSE: Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. —Matthew 5:6

Acting Upon Faith

Genesis 46:1-4 Jacob was an old man. He pulled up stakes in his own country and was taking his family to a strange land. In a long, tiresome line of loaded wagons and numerous people, Jacob, as head of his family, was leading them to Egypt to live near his long-lost son, Joseph. Was it best? What lay ahead of them? Jacob's God was not known or worshiped there. Jacob had doubts and fears. Jacob here set a good example to all of us who become troubled with doubts and fears. Soon Jacob **came to Beersheba**. The journey must be put into the hands of God. There, he **offered sacrifices unto the God of his father, Isaac**. God saw, heard, accepted, and answered. In a night vision, He spoke to Jacob. **Fear not to go . . . I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee . . . I will also surely bring thee up . . . Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes**. God desires His people not fear or worry. Often, He tells us to **fear not**. If God's people would go to God with the moves they are planning to make, many of those moves would not be made. If God does not assure us He will go with us, we had better not go. Trouble in our Christian experience will surely result from such moves. If a move cannot be made in faith, do not make it.

Jacob's sacrifices and worship were sweet incense to God. He spoke to Jacob. He assured Jacob of His presence and future care. Trusting His

promises, Jacob could go on with confidence, knowing he was in God's will. The loving, dependable promises of God made Jacob content. They journeyed on. God will do the same for us in moments of doubt and times of crisis if we listen to His voice and are always ready to obey.

The Settlement in Egypt

Genesis 46:28-34 Entering Egypt, Jacob sent Judah ahead to Joseph for directions into Goshen, the section of Egypt where they were to live. Joseph came to meet his father—after over twenty years of separation. What a glorious reunion this was! **He fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.** Joseph had a tender heart. His love was real and deep. Jacob's love for Joseph was also deep and strong. Seeing Joseph again was such a great blessing that he felt content now to die. This is the contentment we find when we meet Jesus. Joseph advised his brothers to tell Pharaoh that they were shepherds. Then he would allow them to live in Goshen, since Egyptians greatly disliked shepherds.

Genesis 47:1-10 Joseph reported his family's arrival to Pharaoh. He presented five of his brothers to him. When Pharaoh inquired about their occupation, they said they were **shepherds** and wished to **dwell in the land of Goshen.** Pharaoh told Joseph they could choose from the best of the land. If any of the brothers were trained and ambitious workers, they could care for Pharaoh's cattle. Joseph then presented his father. **Jacob blessed Pharaoh.** He was grateful to Pharaoh, and his faith led him to look to God to fulfill His good wishes for him. Pharaoh spoke kindly to an old man and asked his age. He was **an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.** Perhaps he remembered his deception of his father and the injustice to his brother, being deceived in obtaining a wife, defrauded in wages, the sins of his sons, his grief over Joseph, and worry concerning Benjamin. He lived in a sinful world, but his citizenship was in a better world.

Genesis 47:11-26 Joseph placed his family as they desired in the rich land of Goshen and provided them with food. Even when the Egyptians had no bread, Joseph's family was provided for, **for the famine was very sore.** All of Canaan and Egypt needed bread. Joseph sold to them from the storehouses—first, for money; then, to the Egyptians for livestock; and at the last, for land. This made the Egyptians a dependent people, as they rented back the land for one-fifth of the produce.

Genesis 47:27-31 Israel prospered and grew in numbers. After seventeen years, Jacob, knowing his earthly life was drawing to a close, called Joseph

and asked a promise. He asked that his body be carried back to Canaan and buried with his fathers in the ancestral burial cave. Joseph promised to fulfill his wish.

Some Things Never Change

Scattered through the Bible are incidents of human nature that are interesting because they are similar to human nature now. Notice Pharaoh asking the aged Jacob, "How old art thou?" How often do we do the same in showing care and concern for older people? In the previous lesson, after being sent out of the room, the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard Joseph weeping. Were they listening outside the door? Who in our day could avoid a little curiosity after hearing Judah's plea followed by Joseph's cry to go out from him? They had to hear the end of it. And having heard, how could they resist passing on the news that these were Joseph's brothers? How else was "the fame thereof . . . heard in Pharaoh's house" (Genesis 45:16)?

It is true that times have changed in some respects, but human nature has not. God's Word is just the same today as it was hundreds of years ago. The same sin binds people and the same Gospel will still set them free from it as it did when Christ was on earth. That Gospel is fitted to the basic needs of human nature, and it does not change with the years.

JUST A THOUGHT

**It is what we learn after we know it all
that really counts.**



LESSON 12

JACOB'S DEATH AND BURIAL

Scripture Texts: Genesis 47:29-31; 50:1-21

Joseph had his family near him. Jacob and his family were living in security, comfort, and peace. They had Joseph and Benjamin. Only God's loving care brought these good ends out of painful circumstances.

When sinners obey Christ and go to Him, He receives them (Matthew 11:28), gives them a spiritual home in Him and in His church (Acts 2:47), nourishes them spiritually (John 6:27), and supplies their physical needs (Philippians 4:19).

MEMORY VERSE: Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.
—Romans 12:19

Jacob's Last Request

Genesis 47:29-31 Jacob asked Joseph to bind himself by an oath to return him to Canaan for burial. Why did Jacob wish to be buried in Canaan? Because he believed God. He had God's promise that He would make of him a great nation and surely bring him up again to Canaan (Genesis 46:1-4).

When God has a purpose set, He accomplishes it. It was His purpose to take the Israelites to Egypt to use them as a type of His salvation plan, which unfolded in their later history. He fitted many varying occurrences together to bring it about. We now see it as a fact.

Jacob must have understood it to mean the nation would be returned rather than himself personally. He wanted to be buried where they would live. His faith in the promise is shown by his acting upon it. Sometimes we say we believe something, then fear to act upon it. Faith that is real to the point of action is rewarded. God keeps His promises to those who will stand upon them.

After Jacob had Joseph's promise to bury him in Canaan, he fell sick. Calling his sons, he gave prophecies concerning the future of each and charged them to bury his body in Canaan. After Jacob had completed this last bedside meeting with all his sons, he got back into the bed and died (Genesis 49:33).

Joseph's Tender Heart

Genesis 50:1-6 In grief, Joseph wept upon his father's face and kissed him. He ordered his embalming, in which Egyptians were experts and which took forty days. Joseph told Pharaoh of his promise to bury Jacob in Canaan and asked permission to go. Pharaoh granted it.

Joseph had a tender heart. Many times, he wept in sympathy with his family. He forgave his brothers before they asked. He seems never to have held bitterness toward them or Potiphar's wife or any who had wronged him. It was as if he had forgotten those things. He forgot himself. This was because of the love in his heart. We must be like that—and will be by the transforming power of Jesus Christ.

Genesis 50:7-13 A long line of people made up the funeral procession—Pharaoh's servants, the elders of his house and Egypt (leading men of government), Joseph's brothers, Joseph, their families, their servants, and Jacob's servants. They took chariots and horseman. **It was a very great company.** Entering Canaan, they stopped at **the threshing floor of Atad** for seven days of mourning. The depth of their grief was noted by **the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites.** They went on and placed Jacob's body **in the cave of the field of Machpelah** with Abraham and other ancestors.

Genesis 50:14-21 Upon their return to Egypt, Joseph's brothers realized the influences of their father were now gone. With the fear of grieving Jacob removed, would Joseph now avenge himself for the evil they had done to him? It worried them. What a bitter thing is a guilty conscience! It held their sin always before them. They sent a message to Joseph, recounting their father's dying request that he forgive them. They named their act a trespass and a sin. They asked forgiveness, calling themselves **servants of the God of thy father.** If they were now serving God, they had repented and left their former sins. They fell in repentance before Joseph, declaring to be his servants. It would seem their repentance was real, and they were willing to make restitution to the best of their ability.

The dreams God sent to Joseph nearly forty years before had been fulfilled many times. The brothers had bowed, yielded, obeyed, offered their servitude, and now were pledging it fully. Joseph did not take revenge. He had none in his heart. He felt his brothers were exalting him too far above themselves. It was not his place to punish them (Romans 12:19). He was not **in the place of God.** He told them **Fear not,** reminded them of how God had turned their evil to a good end **to save much people alive,** and promised to **nourish** them and their **little ones.**

The Reaping of Sin

In Galatians 6:7, we read a written guarantee of the outgrowth of sins committed. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Sin always begins in the heart before it is an act. The seeds of sin bear bitter fruit. Seeds of sin planted in just a few minutes of time will take years to bring forth their complete reaping. Sin destroys time, talents, and lives. Sin cripples a character that can never be completely restored. Sin never shows the true picture. It shows the bright side, the planting season, but it leaves the dark side, the reaping time, for all to work out for themselves through tears and prayer. Sin gets us into trouble, but sin never helps us to get out. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23). What pay for a life of dedicated service! When payday comes, which will you receive?

JUST A THOUGHT

**When you kill time, just remember
it has no resurrection.**



LESSON 13

THE DEATH OF JOSEPH

Scripture Text: Genesis 50:22-26

Joseph is a type of Christ. He fully forgave his brothers. He loved them and provided for their needs. Christ fully forgives all repentant sinners. He loves them and provides for all their needs.

God accomplishes His purposes. His purpose was to take the Israelites to Egypt. It was done. Joseph did not fail in bringing salvation to literal Israel. Christ did not fail in bringing salvation to spiritual Israel.

MEMORY VERSE: Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.
—Psalm 116:15

Joseph's Last Days

Genesis 50:22-25 God does not work quickly, but He works in a steady and sure manner. He carries out His plan on time. The latter years of Joseph's life were peacefully spent in the happy company of his family. Unlike his father, Jacob, who had sown troublesome seeds and reaped trouble, Joseph lived a peaceable life with God, and now he could live his last days in peace with God and mankind. Joseph learned the secret to success early in life. He refused, time after time, to cut corners on the formula for a successful life that God had given to him. He did not look for an easier way because he knew there was none.

As his active duties lessened, he could spend more time with his grandchildren. Perhaps some of Manasseh's family lived with him and Ephraim's farther away, for he saw Ephraim's grandchildren, but the children of Manasseh's son, Machir, **were brought up upon Joseph's knees**. Joseph made a request of his family similar to the one his father had made. He believed God's promise to Jacob to bring the Israelites back to Canaan. He wanted his body to be near them. He took their oath to carry up his bones with them. His wishes were carried out some years later, as the Scriptures explain.

Joseph's Death

Genesis 50:26 No doubt, as Joseph was taken through the tests God had placed upon him down through the years, he did not recognize them as being

such. Now, as he had time to look back over his life, he understood more about how God had used him, and the importance of the decisions he had made. He could see more clearly how important the attitudes he had formed were in carrying out God's plan. He could look back over a life of one hundred and ten years as something beautiful. Now he was ready to die. He died with no regrets of failure in his life in carrying out God's plan.

Joseph's Heritage

Joseph was a godly man and manifested the nature of God. As Joseph was to his brothers, so, in a greater way, is God to us. God is love. Psalm 106:1 tells us, "His mercy endureth for ever." In Psalm 86:5, we read, "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." Because of His great love for us, God sent Jesus to die in our place so that we might be forgiven.

What led Joseph to the faith in God that he held? Joseph found the secret of success early in his life. As a boy, he was close to his father. He honored him. Jacob could tell Joseph of the times God had spoken to him, how He had led and blessed him, of how God had called his grandfather, Abraham, to Canaan and taught him His truths. Those truths and his faith in God were passed on from Abraham to Isaac and from Isaac to Jacob. Jacob then passed them on to his sons. Joseph listened, believed his words, watched his example, and obeyed his training. Within his heart, faith grew. Real faith leads one to action.

This is a day of much separation between parents and children. Often, little time is spent together as a family. Teaching is scanty and hurried. Training is almost forgotten completely. Family worship is left out. The result is ignorance of God and a lack of trust in Him. Parents neglect children, and children dishonor their parents. We need to get back to the ways of God in the home. Honor of parents brings one the heritage of the parents' faith. We reap as we sow.

In the life of Joseph, we have one of the most complete biographies found in the Bible. From his birth in Haran (Genesis 30:22-24) to his death in Egypt, we have Joseph's record, much of it in great detail. After a study of these lessons, we should be able to see why God gave this story to us. What kind of biography can be written of you?

JUST A THOUGHT

True greatness stoops to bless others.

NOTES

NOTES

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